

THE MADHYA PRADESH POLICY  
FOR WOMEN (DRAFT).



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Ph : 2553 15 18 / 2552 5372  
e-mail : chc@sochara.org



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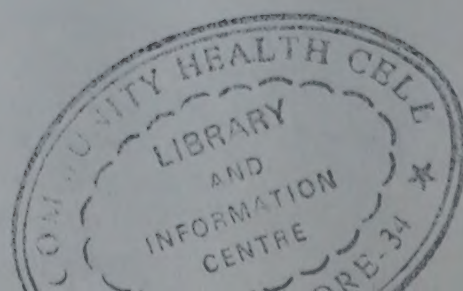
# The Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women

(DRAFT)

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# The Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women

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**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN  
TO TAKE CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR LIFE IS  
FUNDAMENTAL TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.  
THIS FIRM CONVICTION AND AN UNFLINCHING COMMITMENT TO  
REALISE THIS IS THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS PAPER AND IT IS  
DEDICATED TO THE ISSUES, CONCERNS, HOPES, ASPIRATIONS,  
DREAMS AND VISION OF THE  
WOMEN OF MADHYA PRADESH**





*M. P. Me*  
18/8/95

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## 1 Backdrop

Madhya Pradesh is the largest state in India, with a total population of over 66 millions, a large concentration of tribal population, and great regional and cultural diversity. Half of this population is constituted by women (48.2 percent of population). The proportion of women in the population (sex ratio) is low in the northern and north western districts, but reaches parity and beyond in the southern and south-eastern districts.

The literacy level in 1991 for women was 28.85 percent. Within the state, there is much intra-district variation (the highest female literacy levels were found in 1991 in Bhopal (54.17 percent) and the lowest in Jhabua (11.52 percent). Women in Madhya Pradesh work mainly in agriculture, forestry, home based production and the urban informal sector.

Recognising that the problem of women need special focus and attention, the State created a separate Department of Women and Child Development in 1988. This is, however, the first attempt to formulate a comprehensive policy for the empowerment of women in the state that takes into account the specificities of the situation of women in the State.

The Constitution of India, guarantees equal access of women in the process of development as enshrined in articles 14, 15 and 16. These articles guarantee equality before law, equality of opportunity with regard to employment, and empowers the state to make any special provision for women and children. Like the fundamental rights, the Directive Principles are also the instruments for attaining our national objectives of Justice, Liberty and Equality. The Directive Principles in article 39 (a), (d) and (e), and article 42, assert the right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally, equal pay for equal work, the protection of the health and strength of workers - men, women and children - and just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. The Constitution of India provides the framework for the status and development of women, and it is on these lines that the Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women is designed.







The process of developmental planning in India and in Madhya Pradesh has made an attempt to address itself to women from the very beginning. The State now moves ahead from the effort towards women development, which revolved around economic and social programmes. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN is the key item on the agenda today, if iniquitous societal structures are to be broken and women are to take their rightful place in the political, social and economic life of the nation and of our state.

The State considers Women's Empowerment as an ongoing process of collective struggle against the forces that oppress and subordinate women. It emphasises a process of redistribution of all available resources in society - social, economic, political, intellectual and cultural - to ensure women's equal access to them. Further, it recognises woman's productive and reproductive labour, their equal right to work and property, the opportunity for decision making at all levels including the family, the workplace, and the community, equal access to knowledge, the right to life, and equal opportunities for the girl child.

In Madhya Pradesh, a beginning has already been made in this direction. The State has the unique distinction of already having implemented the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, and, conducting elections to the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Municipalities. Since August 1994, rights and duties of the newly elected PRIs with reference to several government departments have been delegated to the Panchayats.

The State of Madhya Pradesh has another distinction, in being one of the first States to implement women's one third representation in all Local Self Government institutions. The elections to the PRIs with a 33.3 percent reservation for women constitute a revolutionary step towards restructuring of power at the village, block and district levels. Nineteen of the forty five Zila Panchayat Presidents in the State are women. There are a total of 1,84,000 women members of the PRI institutions in the State today.

The present policy for women takes into account this path breaking transformation and is intended to equip women for their new role in the exercise of effective political power.







Women are one of the poorest and under-privileged groups in our society, and, development has not always been beneficial to them. Agricultural development and mechanisation has, for instance, taken away from women the important role that they traditionally played in the agrarian economy. Improvements in technology have not looked at female specific jobs in agriculture and crop processing, and, industrial recruitment have similarly marginalised women in the name of so called skill disqualification. The majority of Indian women work in the unorganised sector where the rights of women are the most neglected and overlooked. They not only suffer from discriminatory wage but have also to bear the burden of household chores, which mostly goes unnoticed and unacknowledged.

Gradual feminisation of poverty is another daunting prospect. A greater number of women than ever before continue to live in extreme poverty even as they have no control on their income. They are thus doubly handicapped.

Therefore, women will never be strong until the material basis of their life and livelihood is also strengthened.

It is towards the empowerment and development of women, that the "Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women" is directed.

## **2 A Vision for the Policy on Women**

The Government of Madhya Pradesh is committed to ensuring equality for women in all walks of life, and to improve their condition in the political, economic, social and cultural fields.

In keeping with this commitment, the Government of Madhya Pradesh will seek to achieve a better quality of life for women in all spheres including their mental, physical and emotional well being, and will undertake active advocacy towards this end.

In this venture, the Government of Madhya Pradesh will seek the active collaboration of peoples' representatives, and all agencies including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and concerned individuals.







All efforts will be made to harness resources to achieve the goals and strategies outlined below towards the furtherance of these ends. Special care will be taken to see that resource constraints do not impede the efforts to improve the quality of life of the women in the State, especially the poorest segments.

The goals enshrined in this policy will be sought to be achieved by the turn of the century, i.e. by the year 2000 AD.

### **3 Goals of the Policy on Women**

The main goals of the Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women are :

1. Ensuring the survival and protection of female life.
2. Ensuring the fullest participation of women in Civil Society, and strengthening their role in decision making.
3. Enhancing the status of Women.
4. Empowerment of Women to enable them to take the fullest advantage of developmental efforts in all fields.
5. Affirmative action to ensure Women's full participation in economic activity.
6. Ensuring the visibility of women in all walks of life.
7. Bringing about sensitisation and attitudinal change in the larger society on the women's question.
8. Prevention of atrocities and acts of violence against women.

Towards this end, the government is committed to evolving suitable strategies and developing appropriate programmes for women, and provide, where necessary, positive discrimination and support for groups of women needing special attention.





The government is also committed to the active promotion of an ideology of women's equality as opposed to one of women's subordination.

## Strategies

Based upon the stated goals of the Policy, and the two principal priorities of empowerment of women and women's economic, social and cultural development and progress, the strategies are outlined below.

The Government will seek actively to promote the increase of women's control over land, property and other common resources.

Women headed households will be recognised and supported in the planning process and programmes.

The government, since it recognises women as major stake holders in the development of common property resources, will seek to increase the participation of women in decision making about the management of these resources.

The Government will take steps to increase employment for women at all levels, particularly in the development and social sectors. A reservation of 30 percent will be held for women for all jobs in all sectors.

There will be no age bar for women belonging to certain categories like widows, handicapped etc. seeking employment in these sectors.

The Government will ensure that Women's visibility is apparent in data collection and statistical record keeping of the State. This will involve the reorientation of data generation, updation, and presentation systems to incorporate gender desegregated data.

An expert group will be created in the Planning Department to study the impact of all developmental investments vis-à-vis women.

A review mechanism will be set up to oversee sectoral implementation of the Policy on Women by the different agencies in the State.





9. Active steps will be taken to arrest and reduce the levels of female mortality in the State. Particular emphasis will be given to the containment of maternal and early childhood female mortality and to the reduction of female malnutrition.
  10. An action plan will be drawn up and implemented for the survival, protection and development of the Girl Child.
  11. The Government will recognise women as producers, and will seek to cover them fully under its extension programmes.
  12. Active support will be given to women in the role of economic producers by the inter linking of activities of Women's thrift and credit groups, grass root programmes like DWCRA and GRAMYA, District Supply and Marketing Agencies, State level agencies like the Mahila Arthik Vikas Nigam and National agencies like the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh.
  13. Top priority will be accorded to the training and sensitisation of all level of government functionaries on Gender issues.
- All government institutions will incorporate Gender Sensitisation as part of their programmes.
14. The sensitisation of elected members of the PRIs and urban local self government bodies on gender issues, particularly on the issue of violence against women will be undertaken extensively.
  15. The government will take care to ensure the equitable flow of credit and institutional finance to women in all sectors including the home based and the informal. To this end, it will devise effective strategies and innovative mechanisms.
  16. Representatives of Women's User groups will be incorporated into the SLCC and SLBC to ensure flow of credit to women in all sectors, and a similar provision will be made at lower levels like the DRDA, DLBC, BLBC and other bodies. A similar provision will be made in the case of Regional Rural Banks, Boards and Cooperatives.





17. Women will now constitute 40 percent of the total membership of all state constituted Advisory Boards and Empowered Groups.
18. Steps will be taken to ensure a productive relationship between government agencies, NGOs and the academicians on women's issues.
19. All State laws will be scanned to ensure that women's status and interests are protected and if needed to initiate the process of amendment to secure these interests. At the same time, it will be ensured that laws relating to women are enforced and that all future legislations keep these interests in mind.
20. Measures will be undertaken to ensure the prevention of abuse, exploitation and perpetration of atrocities on women and girls in families, communities and institutions.
21. Special measures will be taken for the protection of vulnerable sections of women like the aged, the destitute, the emotionally disturbed, the mentally retarded and the physically handicapped.
22. The government will make special efforts to take technology to women and support measures to make technology women friendly.
23. The government will take steps to strengthen and upgrade women's technical, entrepreneurial and managerial skills, especially in sectors where large numbers of women are concentrated like the agriculture and allied and urban informal sectors. A similar effort will be extended to women artisans and crafts persons.
24. The government will initiate attempts to influence youth and the academia through suitable curricular modification highlighting a positive and independent image of women. The government will also encourage action research in this field by academic institutions and NGOs.
25. All Women's Colleges in the State will set up counselling cells particularly to provide information and guidance on employment opportunities for the women of the neighbourhood.







## 5 Salient Sectors - An Agenda for Change

### 5.1 Women and Panchayati Raj

Political empowerment of women has taken a leap with the new Panchayati Raj system and the representation given to women. A series of significant steps need to be taken to complete this transformation. For one, many of our women unused to a decision making role, still face considerable difficulty in carrying out their newly assumed responsibilities. To overcome this shortcoming, the government will take steps to help women to strengthen and realise their leadership capabilities. The government will :

1. Carry out training programmes for women members of the PRIs that are both extensive and intensive. The training will be carried out in a phased manner through state level institutions like the Academy of Administration and by making full use of district level training infrastructures. The government will also seek active cooperation and partnership of NGOs.
2. Encourage women, through media and awareness campaigns to participate actively in the meetings of the Gram Sabha.
3. Ensure that at least one third of all sub-committees of the PRIs at district, block and village levels and in urban local self government bodies are headed by women.

### 5.2 Women and Land

In Madhya Pradesh, as elsewhere in the country, the single most important economic factor affecting women's situation is the gender gap in control over property. Few women own land in their own names and fewer still control it. Since land is the most important collateral in seeking productive loans, this affects women's access to credit as well. To remedy this situation, the following measures will be initiated.







1. Land rights will be extended to women. Steps will be taken to amend the appropriate laws to extend co-percenary rights to women and to enter, in all future mutations, the names of all entitled women members of a family as Bhoomi Swamis in the land records.

2. All land distribution and redistribution will be made in the joint name of wife and husband. Women will get priority in all such distribution including ceiling surplus lands, be it agricultural or urban.

3. All village common lands will be vested in the joint control of adult resident women of the village. These lands will be managed on their behalf by the panchayats with their concurrence and no decision regarding the development or alienation of these lands shall be validated without the approval of this body.

4. The government will promote the use of these common lands by the women for environmental regeneration, meeting of the fuel wood requirement, development of common grazing grounds and for other productive purposes through suitable schemes.

5. In all future recruitment of patwaris, at least 30 percent of the new entrants will be women.

### **5.3 Women in Agriculture**

An overwhelming number of women in the State work in the agricultural sector, with 51 percent of all female main workers involved in agriculture, according to the 1991 Census. Taken with the 38 percent working in the agriculture allied sector, around 88 percent of females main workers are dependent of agriculture and its allied activities (or the farm sectors).

The State Government recognises women as farmers in their own right and it shall ensure the percolation of this recognition and awareness to all levels of government agencies. To achieve this objective, the government will -





1. Reorient extension staff and services to cater to the needs of women farmers.
2. Revamp Agricultural Training Institutes and redesign training courses to make them gender sensitive.
3. Promote action research on the role of women in agriculture and the development of women friendly agricultural technology.
4. Develop innovative technologies in agriculture with specific focus on women intensive areas including agricultural processing and post harvest operations and create a climate for absorption of these technologies.
5. Encourage women through incentives and scholarships to take up higher education and technical courses in agriculture.
6. Increase the number of women among agricultural extension staff and higher level technical and managerial staff.
7. Increase women's representation on agricultural marketing bodies (mandi samitis) to at least one third of the total membership in a phased manner.
8. Introduce appropriate legislation to increase women's membership of primary cooperative societies to at least one third of their strength.
9. Make sure that Women agricultural workers get the statutory minimum wages at par with men. Steps must be initiated to extend social security benefits including accident compensation and child care facilities to women agricultural wage labourers and the necessary machinery and appellate structure should be set up to enforce this.
10. Norms of equal wages for men and women will be intensively published in rural areas through the government machinery and NGO efforts.





#### 5.4 Women in the Agricultural Allied Sectors (Dairy, Animal Husbandry, Sericulture, Pisciculture, Horticulture and Floriculture)

Like agriculture, the State government recognises the women workers in these sectors as producers (according to the 1991 census, 38 percent of all female main workers are working in the agriculture allied sector). Thus, she is a fisher women, a milk producer, a vegetable and fruit grower, sericulturist and floriculturist in her own right. To ensure that this recognition is adequately reflected in the policies and programmes of the State, the Government of Madhya Pradesh will -

1. Reorient extension staff in the relevant sectors to cater to women's needs.
2. Provide training inputs to women in the relevant sectors to be able to function effectively.
3. Revamp training institutes in the relevant sectors to be sensitive to the needs of women in the sector.
4. Give preference to women's groups in the granting of river bed/ tank bed / orchard pattas for growing seasonal fruits and vegetables.
5. Give priority to women's groups for fishing rights in ponds and tanks (tank pattas).
6. Increase the recruitment of women as fisheries inspectors.
7. Pursue vigorously women's further involvement in sericulture.
8. Increase women's managerial capabilities and provide technical support to equip them to undertake entrepreneurial activities, handle marketing and backward-forward linkages.
9. Promote technological upgradation particularly in the areas where women are engaged extensively.





## 5.5 Women and Forests

Madhya Pradesh is a State with almost one third of its total area under forest cover. There are about 1300 forest villages in the State.

Ten of thousands of women live and earn their livelihood in forest areas, majority of them belonging to scheduled tribes.

The State policy for women is committed to the improvement of the conditions of life and work of women in the forestry sector. The government will, therefore -

1. Make sure that wages in Tendu leaf collection is handed over to the women of the household. Women and children form in any case the majority of those engaged in collection.
2. Increase women's membership in Minor Forest Produce Cooperative Societies to at least half of their total strength.
3. Give greater managerial roles and the necessary training to women engaged in Tendu leaf collection. To this end, at least 20 percent of the posts of 'Phad Munshis' in every range will be filled up by women in the first two years and this proportion be increased to 50 percent by the turn of the century.
4. Provide sheds in the Tendu Leaf collection centres where potable drinking water, rest and child care facilities are available for the women engaged in tendu leaf collection.
5. Strengthen and safeguard from exploitation women's role in the collection, processing and marketing of other minor forest produce by the formation of women's cooperatives and the inner linking of ongoing developmental programmes like DWCRA, Thrift and Credit Societies and the support of the Mahila Arthik Vikas Nigam.





6. Find ways to improve the quality of life inside the forest settlements to reduce on women the burden of household sustenance under exceptionally trying conditions. To this end, institute provisions for better health care, education, sanitation and safe drinking water in the forest settlements.

7. The government will provide access to non-conventional energy sources like solar panels for lighting and the installation of community gohar gas plants for meeting women's domestic energy needs.

8. Women will be recognised as equal partners in the 'Tree Patta' and Joint Forest Management Programmes with an assured 50 percent representation. Women's actual presence and decision making in JFM schemes will have to be secured. Women's cooperatives to take up forest protection and nursery raising activities will be promoted.

9. The Government will introduce welfare measures to reduce the occupational hazards of women working in the forestry sector.

## 5.6 Women and Credit

Women's access to credit is extremely important for their economic empowerment. To ensure that there is a manifold increase in credit flows to women, the following measures will be initiated.

1. The government will ensure that formal credit to women is stepped up significantly.

2. The State Government will create an autonomous umbrella organisation providing credit and development support to micro financing institutions working with women. This agency will also act as a bridge with the national level Rashtriya Mahila Kosh on behalf of the grass root groups. To be known as Madhya Pradesh Mahila Finance and Development Corporation ( M P M F D C ), it will replace the existing Mahila Arthik Vikas Nigam and subsume its ongoing activities. This organisation will also act as a link between government agencies, NGOs and academicians on women's issues.





- 3.. Targets for 50 percent lending to women beneficiaries under all priority sector programmes including IRDP will be set up and maintained.
4. The recording of land rights in women's names will be a long way in ensuring rural women's access to credit. However, urban informal sector women will not directly benefit from this measure and they would need specific soft credit facilities on a priority basis.
5. In the present climate of financial discipline, existing banking institutions may not be able to fulfil this role adequately. To cover this need, the government will give active encouragement to the establishment of women's cooperative banks.
6. The formation of women's thrift and credit groups will be encouraged. These groups will first be established as self help groups, and later as they gain strength, may avail the refinancing facility under the NABARD. These groups will be started on a pilot basis in a selected number of districts and be the forerunners of DWCRA projects. The experiment, if successful will be extended to all the districts of the State.
7. To operationalise the above effort, pilot projects to build up women's thrift and credit movements on appropriate models will be set up in two districts within the next one year with the help of lead organisations.
8. A wide range of established responsive institutions including credit unions, NGOs and grass root women's groups will be encouraged to participate in the small and micro enterprise financing market serving women, provided they meet the established standards. The standards will relate to the capacity to meet the credit and savings needs of the lower 50 percent of the economically active population where most women are concentrated. The government will give encouragement to these NGOs through appropriate support and incentives.





## 5.7 Women and Industry

Women work in industry both as entrepreneurs and as workers. The government envisages adequate representation of women within this sector. To ensure this, the following steps are contemplated.

1. Preferential access to soft credit and infrastructural facilities to women entrepreneurs will be enhanced.
2. Training will be provided to women entrepreneurs through counselling and information cells within the Industries Department.
3. Special efforts will be made to ensure women's participation in industrial employment. This will be done through the provision of training opportunities in industrial skills both within and outside the industry and through the provision of adequate social security support including child care facilities for women industrial workers.
4. The proposed State Commission of Women and the Labour Department will jointly oversee that women are not retrenched from industrial employment on account of gender bias. In such cases, these two bodies will pursue and follow up through the industrial adjudication process.
5. 30% seats will be reserved for women in the ITIs of the state to ensure training of women in industrial skills.
6. To cater to the special requirements of women who may have been adversely affected in the course of industrial restructuring, special programmes will be devised to find for them meaningful economic roles.
7. Incentives and subsidies will be offered to industries that take in women apprentices.
8. As part of its advocacy, efforts for women's employment, the State Government will institute an award for industries that promote women's employment.
9. Child care facilities and separate toilets for women will be provided in all undertakings where more than twenty five women work.





## 5.8 Migrant Women Workers

In several parts of the State, most notably in the Chhattisgarh region, seasonal out migration of poor people is a chronic problem. Since women are the hardest hit in this situation, the government of Madhya Pradesh is particularly concerned to provide all possible support to them, at the same time advising necessary policy and programme interventions to discourage the process of migration. To this end, the government will :

1. Continue to strive to improve economic opportunities within the state and the migration prone districts so as to discourage migration which causes undue hardship to women and children.
2. Ensure better linkages between Employment Assurance Schemes (EAS) and self employment schemes in the migration prone districts.
3. Provide Identity cards to the migrant workers so that in times of distress both within and outside the State they can establish their identity to seek the help of the district administration, courts and NGOs
4. Make sure that the social security needs of migrant workers are fully met and that they are entitled to all legal protection that are due to any other sector of workers. To oversee this, the Government will establish Tripartite bodies to the representatives of employers, workers and the Labour Department.
5. Conduct legal literacy courses for migrant women workers.
6. Increase the awareness and skill of basic health practices especially of reproductive and child health, so that women during migration are better equipped to take care of their needs during their absence from home. The State Government will equip its own health machinery to organise special camps for this purpose and will encourage NGOs to come forward with concrete action plans in this regard.
7. Institute, through Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission, innovative and flexible programmes for the education of migrant workers' children, and to encourage NGOs to come forward in this endeavour.





8. Create a special cell in the Labour Department to monitor the status of migrant women workers, and to seek the assistance of NGOs in getting feedback on the status of migrant women. NGOs working with migrant workers may be specially designated as labour inspectors.

9. Special sensitisation programmes will be carried out for Labour Department officials dealing with migrant women workers.

## 5.9 The Physical and Social Sectors

The issue of female survival has attained paramount importance in view of the low sex ratio and comparatively poor life expectancy (the sex ratio in 1991 was 931 and the expectancy of life at birth for females in 1986-91 was 54.7 years as against the male figure of 56.2 and the national figures of 59.1 and 58.1 respectively). The State avers a special need to take urgent action to improve the health and survival chances of women.

### 5.9.1 Women and Health

The Government of Madhya Pradesh reiterates its commitment to improve the physical well being and survival of women. And it will :

1. Extend ICDS programme to cover all districts of the State by 2000 AD.
2. Step up health care and nutritional programmes for women and girls throughout the State.
3. Strengthen the health care delivery system and build up a strong thrust on reproductive health.
4. Increase women's knowledge and awareness about basic and reproductive health.
5. Launch safe motherhood and 'dal' training programmes on a massive scale throughout the State and undertake measures to make them more effective. The CSSM is to be expanded to cover all districts at the soonest.







6. Since the promotion of home and institutional deliveries are not mutually exclusive goals, the State government will seek to integrate and link the conventional and institutional delivery but ensuring adequate and effective training of 'dais'. PHCs may be developed as referral institutions for difficult or obstructed labour.
7. The Government will ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection (Regulation) Act and will actively discourage the practice of fetal sex determination through executive and educational means.
8. Urgent steps will be taken to reduce the infant mortality levels in the State through the stepping up of CSSM, immunisation programmes, provision of safe drinking water and nutrition packages.
9. A cafeteria approach of multiple method choices available to the couple for selection will be the thrust of family welfare programmes. Targeting of men as recipient of Family Planning services will find special emphasis. The use of inadequately tested long acting hormonal contraceptives will be examined.
10. To contain and check malnutrition, top priority will be given to the provision of food security for poor women. Since intra household disparities in food distribution account for a large proportion of the malnutrition levels, and since malnutrition for women and girls has wide ramifications, the Public Distribution System will focus sharply on the poorest households and PDS delivery system will be streamlined to achieve this objective.
11. Extension efforts will be stepped up to reduce severe and moderate malnutrition among girls and women. The close coordination of the departments of Health and WCD will be ensured towards the same end.
12. Data on maternal mortality and sex specific Infant mortality will be generated for the State and its subregions and a nutrition information system to provide gender disaggregated data will be developed.





13 The possibility of building up a cadre of community based adequately trained women swasthya karmis to cater to basic health needs of large uncovered population may be worked out.

### 5.9.2 Women and Water

In recognition of the role of women as the primary collectors and users of water, the Government will :

1. Ensure the fullest participation of women in management of water sources.
2. Reconstitute the WATSAN Committees, with at least 50 percent female membership and increase female participation in standing committees on drinking water in the Zila Panchayats, Janpad Panchayats, Gram Panchayats and Municipal Local Bodies.
3. Involve women in water shed management and water conservation activities and ensure 50 percent representation in the relevant decision making bodies.
4. Involve women in water testing and water source location activities and actively involve them in the community maintenance of hand pumps. Women will be deployed as hand pump 'rakshaks' in a massive way to constitute 50 percent of the total force over the next five years.
5. The Government to take up rural sanitation projects on a massive scale and make a similar effort in the urban slums. Women are to be actively involved in the decision making process regarding sanitation (waste disposal, drainage etc.)
6. The field staff of the Public Health Department will undergo gender sensitisation.

### 5.9.3 Education and the Girl Child

The Government of Madhya Pradesh is committed to guarantee a better tomorrow for every girl child in the State. The girl child will be the major focus of women's education in the State and education itself will be a major instrument of change. In keeping with this commitment, it will :





1. Ensure that all girl children are in school or NFE Centres by the year 1998 AD.
2. Provide free test books upto class VIII for all girls coming from families below the poverty line.
3. Introduce innovative financial packages which will act as incentives in girls' education like depositing a principal amount in the name of every girl child (upto an upper limit of two) by the district administration which will only mature and be available with attractive interest on the girls having gone through the school system.
4. Since many school going girls are left out of the educational mainstream because of having to care for younger siblings, link up day care centres with primary schools and adjust their timings with one another.
5. Ensure the provision of middle schools for girls within safe and easy access from every village in the State. Towards this end, increase budgetary allocation, if needed.
6. Introduce flexibility in time and structure for schools to ensure the participation of girls.
7. Provide toilets for girls in schools.
8. To sensitise teachers and panchayat representatives on gender issues and seek their help in ensuring 100 percent enrolment of girls in schools.
9. Sensitise parents on girls education and improve class room atmosphere to make education a stress free, joyful and encouraging experience for girls.
10. Reexamine and rewrite text books to remove subservient images of women and to build up a positive image of womanhood.





11. Introduce Gender Studies in the basic course of all universities and other institutions of higher learning.

### 5.10 Women and Violence

Violence is perpetrated on women in numerous ways, both within the family and outside. Madhya Pradesh has its own peculiar trends and specific areas of concern, which are rooted in diverse ethnic beliefs and superstitions as well as lack of awareness. To tackle this problem, the government needs to

1. Crime and atrocities committed against women deserve strong deterrent punishment. The state government will recommend to the GOI to suitably amend IPC to make rape a capital offence.
2. Any person who has been convicted of an offence against women or against whom charge has been framed by the court will be debarred from holding any office in PRIs and Local Bodies or contesting for them.
3. Discourage strongly the role of the media, advertising and the commodification of women's body which, in present day consumer ideology, have a large role to play in the growth of the culture of violence against women. The state will recommend to the GOI to set up control mechanisms like a code of conduct laying down permissible limits for the media as also a system of women juries in charge of 'Media Courts' with judicial powers on the lines of consumer courts to be responsible for ensuring conformity with the norms set up under the code. This will be applicable to print and electronic media.
4. Apart from violence faced by women from within the family and criminal elements, many women in Madhya Pradesh also are victims of systemic violence from within their own communities. Instances include prostitution of Bedia and Banchda women, persecution of single women as witches (dakin/ tonhi) and practice of Natra etc.

While customary practices and belief systems have many elements that promote a positive image of women (e.g. women's equal part in public production and freedom from the ideology of feminine frailty), they also have many negative and unacceptable elements.





There is a need to examine these belief systems, encourage and promote the positive elements, and carry out a strong and sustained attack on elements that degrade women. This attack can take the form of analysis, exposure, education and penal action. Since, attitudinal changes are involved ultimately, the PRIs being closest to the people can play an important role in educational campaigns on these issues to bring about attitudinal change.

Jathas to debunk the superstitions associated with these instances of systemic violence can be linked up to the environment building activities for the TLCs and media campaigns on these issues can be launched by Madhyam.

5. Women are also the victims of domestic violence. This will be discouraged in the strongest terms through the media and awareness campaigns and domestic violence will be made a culpable offence.
6. Alcoholism is one of the major factors which aid and sustain crime and violence against women within and outside home. Women's say in permitting liquor outlets in any village or town area needs to be asserted. Liquor outlets will be closed and removed if half the women in a village or a mohalla demand the closure of the sale outlet.
7. Urgent steps are needed to set up supportive structures for the women victims of violence. Short stay homes with provision for medical, psychological and economic rehabilitation, will be setup in each district. The Government will involve responsible NGOs in the setting up and running of these and provide financial and infrastructural support.
8. Similar homes will also be set up for women who are mentally unstable. Such women are often the worst victims of violence and societal callousness.
9. The Government will ensure that its women employees, particularly in the health and educational departments, who are posted to far flung areas, are able to live and carry out their duties in security and freedom from pressure.





The network of working Women's hostels will be expanded to provide safe accommodation to working women without immediate family support.

10. There will be an increase in the representation of women in the police force. Women headed police stations are to be set up in large numbers.

The police force and the judiciary will be sensitised at all levels to deal with violence within and outside the family.

11. The Panchayats will be actively involved in ensuring protection to women from violence within and outside the home.

12. Self defence training for women, and particularly for adolescent girls, will be organised on a massive scale.

13. Family counselling centres run by NGOs will be promoted in each district and block headquarter. Through similar network, legal aid and counselling services will be expanded, and legal literacy classes will be organised for women and girls through the Panchayats and urban local self government institutions and NGOs.

14. A committee will be appointed to go into the question of custodial violence on women in State-run institutions, including women under trial prisoners and women inmates of Nari Niketans. In all such institutions, skill development for reintegration into the societal mainstream will be the most important focus of activity.

15. Strong steps will be taken to inculcate a public image of the strong and enabled women. These will break traditional mores that make women invisible and make many atrocities on women a non culpable offence. Strategies could include the organisation of sports meets and cycle rallies and martial art training sessions. A part of the Panchayat funds will be set aside for the promotion of such activities.





16. A multi-pronged effort is to be undertaken to combat sexual trafficking in women and sexual molestation. Special powers and special support will be given to gram panchayats and NGOs who are working in combating these crimes and towards the rehabilitation of victims of these crimes.

17. The police act will be modified so that the gram panchayats and urban self government bodies are involved in the handling of crimes against women.

18. The government will recommend changes in appropriate laws to evolve a mechanism for the trial of Cases of sexual molestation of women by all women juries and more rigorous punishments for such crimes than at present.

19. The Government will ensure that cases of child rape and child molestation will be handled through special machinery sensitised to deal with such cases.

### **5.11 Women and the Law**

A major step towards the empowerment of women is to equip her to take the fullest help and advantage of legal provisions to protect herself and her rights as a person, a wife, a mother. It is equally important to make the enforcement machinery and the supportive structures effective to implement the laws. Women's rights must be recognised as Human Rights.

Measures that can be initiated in this regard are :

1. Legal literacy to be provided to women on a large scale and through a wide variety of means, including 'jagriti shivirs', panchayat training, in schools and girls' hostels.
2. Institution of Lok Nyayatayas for the speedy disposal of family cases.





3. Amendments to the Guardianship Act to enable the mother to be the guardian of the child.
4. Waiver of court fees for women litigants when their cases relate to violence, property, maintenance and divorce. Free legal aid to be provided to women victims of violence and sexual molestation.
5. Extension of legal aid facilities to women under trial prisoners and their minor children.
6. Sensitisation of the police force, the jail staff and public prosecutors on women's cases.
7. Increased representation of women in prosecution agencies.
8. The Government will request the High Court to ensure a periodic review of crimes against women in the State.

#### 6 State Commission

A State Commission on Women is to be set up as a duly constituted statutory body with its accountability and responsibility clearly worked out. It will be the duty of this Commission to oversee the permeation of all programmes of the Government with a holistic gender approach.

The Commission will set up institutional criteria for evaluation and monitoring of programmes with the help of a larger constituency of women's organisations, elected members of PRIs and other citizens' fora. Through this larger constituency, the Commission will also take a lead in the gender sensitisation of all levels of public servants.

Capacity building for monitoring and evaluation will be another function of the Commission as will the sharing of evaluation data with the larger public as well as the Government planning process.





Indicators for evaluation would be both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative indicators, *inter alia*, may include maternal and infant mortality rates, the sex ratio (proportion of women to men in the population), life expectancy at birth, average age at marriage, literacy and work participation rates, and the number of women participating in any given programme.

## 7 Conclusion

The preceding pages have attempted to capture the conviction and commitment of the Madhya Pradesh Government towards comprehensive well being, development and progress of women. It acknowledges the fact that economic and social progress must proceed side by side. Together they provide synergy for greater prosperity and sustained development, apart, they eventually and inevitably hold each other back.

It is also an acknowledgement of the challenges that lie ahead. The foremost being the role of women in the process of development and to transform their role from recipient to the agent and instrument of progress and development, from receiver of government doles and welfare measures to a participant and decision maker and controller of resources. It is to underline the truth that empowerment, economic, political and social alone holds the key to any meaningful attempt in this direction.

It is also an attempt to bring the gender issue centre stage, which is as inevitable and as certain as the process of development itself. These issues must occupy their rightful place on the political and social agenda of the State.

The policy document is an enabling instrument which spells out specific strategies which seek to improve and increase women's access and control over resources, change institutional, legal and societal environment and attitudes towards women and above all foster their economic strength through mobilisation, easy availability of credit, increased access over the factors of production, training, skill upgradation and manifold increase in the opportunities for income generation. Increase in the real visibility and enhanced decision-making role will also prove to be critical to the process.





Women are considered the weaker sex. This image has to be consciously and consistently removed and replaced by one of strength and independence. The violence and atrocities both physical and psychological against women has to be contained by forcing the issue to the fore and facing it squarely. Aggression and strength and not protection will eventually be the remedy.

The policy stresses working with Non-Governmental sector as a matter of conscious policy and recognises the need of multi-media intervention, lobbying, networking and advocacy for the legitimate and urgent causes concerning women. The Government must carry out its role as the prime mover to gather together and lead all the players and forces working in this area to a new paradigm.

This is a pledge and a commitment for bringing in a new order - fair, just, equitable and lasting, a new humane order symbolising equity with dignity and development with sustenance.









